**Name: Alex Acevedo**

**District running for: State Representative 2nd District**

**Political party: Democratic**

**Political/civic background: Chairman of Y.P. Mobile C.A.R.E. Foundation and President of Young Achievers of Pilsen**

**Occupation: Pediatric Nurse**

**Education:** Bachelor’s of Science in Nursing

**Campaign website:** acevedoforall.com

**Chicago Sun-Times Editorial Board questionnaire responses**

**Taxes/Budget:**

Q. *Illinois has a massive state debt and crushing pension debt. Many elected officials from the governor to state lawmakers have indicated there is a need for additional revenue to help balance the budget.  If Illinois needs to generate additional revenue, which options would you support in a budget package:*

*1.     Increase the state’s income tax on individuals or corporations, either temporarily or permanently.*

Yes, I could support an increase if the new dollars go toward state funded programs such as senior care, child care, education and public safety that are currently under threat of being cut or eliminated.

*2.     Expand the sales tax to services.*

Yes, I could support a limited expansion of sales taxes on services if the new dollars go toward state funded programs such as senior care, child care, education and public safety that are currently under threat of being cut or eliminated.

*3.     Tax retirement income in excess of $50,000.*

No

*4.     Adopt a progressive income tax.*

Yes – I believe the wealthy should pay more in taxes than working families.

*If you oppose all tax hikes, please provide specifics on how you would reduce state spending by $7 billion to balance the state budget.*

A)

Q) *Do you support another legislative attempt at pension reform? If so, which proposed changes in the pension system would you support that you believe would pass constitutional muster?*

A) First and foremost, Illinois must put an end to any thought that it can solve the pension crisis on the backs of government employees and retirees who have spent their careers paying into the pension system. I do believe something needs to be done. The answer is not taking away from those who have paid into the system for what they have earned. I believe all stakeholders must sit down at the table to work toward a solution that is respectful of both the employees and taxpayers. I would hope that there are very bright people on both sides, who if they believe they are negotiating in good faith with a similar goal, can come up with a solution that will bring peace of mind to employees, retirees and taxpayers while allowing Illinois to move forward with the business of growing our economy and putting people to work.

Q) *Do you support a budget template developed by a bipartisan, bicameral group of legislators that would allow members to pass a budget without the consent of the legislative leaders?*

A) Illinois is now in its 7th month without a budget. The General Assembly passed a budget to the Governor which he vetoed in its entirety with the exception of the K-12 budget. In the past, Governors would participate in the budget process, including the use of his amendatory veto powers to reflect their ideas on what the budget should be. That has changed with Governor Rauner. He won’t participate unless he gets his way. I understand we are in different times but even former Republican Governor’s Edgar and Thompson have criticized Governor Rauner’s handling of the situation. With that being said, I have serious concerns when one branch of government is unwilling to govern and instead is willing to put the health and well-being of our most vulnerable citizens at risk so that they get 100% of what they want. Government is about compromise. I believe both chambers in the General Assembly, both political parties, and the Governor need to remember that. I’m for a budget that is build off of compromise with the best interests of all the stakeholders in mind.

**Education:**

Q) *What, if anything, should we do to change how we fund schools?*

A) Illinois has a responsibility to educate our children. The first thing we need to do act on that responsibility. Chicago schools are an easy punching bag for politicians in the suburbs and downstate who use regional biases to make political gains with their constituents. While doing so, they are putting our children in harm’s way. The first thing we need to do is to make sure that every child has the resources necessary to provide them with an education. I would support a progressive income tax where the wealthy pay more and then those funds then make their way to those most in need. The inequities in education across Illinois are great and at the end of the day this only hurts the future economic well-being of our state. We need to address these inequities, not take further resources from Chicago schools, and embrace our responsibility as a state to all children.

Q) *Do you favor the state picking up the pension costs for Chicago teachers, as the state does for teachers outside Chicago? Do you favor school districts outside Chicago picking up their own pension costs, as Chicago does now?*

A) Yes, I favor Illinois picking up the pension costs for Chicago teachers. I believe Illinois should pick up the pension costs for all teachers throughout the state. Illinois has a responsibility to provide our children with the best possible education. I want to embrace that responsibility.

Q) *State support for public higher education has declined for two decades. Do you favor the status quo or a significant increase in state funding? What is your plan to restore Illinois’ leadership in public higher education?*

A) Yes, I believe Illinois needs to rethink how they fund higher education. Our immediate problem is what Governor Rauner’s inability to compromise on a higher education budget is doing to our higher education institutions and the students who rely on MAP grants to make tuition. He saw fit to sign the K-12 budget into law but failed to use his power to adjust the higher education budget to reflect his ideas. By doing so, our colleges and universities are facing catastrophe. Chicago State is saying they may have to close their doors. Recent news reports indicate enrollment is down by 1000 students because students aren’t receiving the MAP grants they were told to expect.

**Transportation**:

Q) *Illinois has a tremendous backlog of infrastructure needs: roads, bridges, waterways, transit. What would be a good way to pay for it? Do you support an increased gas tax — and/or other taxes and fees — to finance infrastructure improvements, including public transit?*

A) I believe we need to invest in our infrastructure, especially our roads and public transit. I would support dedicating funds from a progressive income tax, where the wealthy pay more, to pay for infrastructure improvements and increased public transit. I am hesitant to raise the gas tax. The price of gasoline fluctuates greatly and while it is low right now, it is not inconceivable that it doubles before the year is out. Another factor is the increase in hybrid and electric vehicles, which use less gasoline that a car with only a combustion engine. If the funding source is a gas tax, those with a gas engine only vehicle would be paying a greater percentage of the increase than those with a hybrid even though the hybrid owner using the roads just as much. For these reasons, I believe we should look for a funding source other than an increase in the gas tax to pay for improvements.

Q) *Illinois’ public transportation formula provides money for operating costs, but not capital costs. Should Illinois create a reliable funding stream for capital costs?*

A) Yes I could support legislation that creates a reliable funding stream for capital costs, but before we dedicate new dollars to pay for public transit capital costs, we need to ensure the programs that are facing drastic cuts or elimination due to the budget impasse are preserved. These include senior services, child care, education and public safety.

**Jobs:**

Q)  *Illinois has long been a strong manufacturing state. Today, Illinois employs fewer than 600,000 manufacturing workers and manufacturing’s share of the Gross State Product has dropped to 12.4 percent.  Our state saw the loss of nearly 10,000 manufacturing jobs in 2015 and announcements from some high-profile companies of job losses. The average manufacturing job pays more than $70,000 and helps create a strong middle class.  Name the top three things that you would do to help attract and retain manufacturing jobs in Illinois.*

A) I believe the first thing we need to do is pass a budget and when that is done, make sure we don’t repeat the process when Fiscal Year 17 begins. It makes manufacturers think twice, and rightfully so, before they invest their company’s resources into building or expanding a facility in Illinois. I would work to bring economic stability to Illinois government so a manufacturer knows what to expect year in and year out. I also believe Illinois needs to embrace its responsibility to educate our children. We need to put an end to inequalities in education. Every child in Illinois should be given an education that prepares them for the workforce of the future. Companies needs to know that their future workforce is as close as the nearest school. If they are going to invest in our communities, they need to know Illinois is investing in our children and communities also. I would also put an end to red tape and government bureaucracy that stifles growth and becomes so frustrating that if a company is presented with an opportunity to move elsewhere, they don’t hesitate to act upon it. Illinois should have a business environment that is so accommodating to companies that they don’t think twice before turning down another state trying to get them to move there.

**Energy:**

Q)  *Illinois has a very diverse energy portfolio and is a net exporter of energy in a deregulated marketplace. Energy is poised to be major issue in 2016 because of federal regulations and possible changes in Illinois’ energy portfolio. Nuclear energy emits zero carbon emissions at a time when the new federal rule requires Illinois to reduce carbon emissions by 44 percent. Do you support or oppose legislation backed by Exelon to create a low-carbon portfolio standard?*

A) Yes

Q)  *Illinois’ current Renewable Portfolio Standard calls for Illinois to procure a certain percentage of renewable power by the year 2020.  The state is only halfway to its goal, and there is a proposal to increase the required amount of renewable energy and extending the time period to meet that goal. Do you support or oppose increasing Illinois Renewable Portfolio Standard even if the cost of power increases slightly? Do you support or oppose the Illinois Clean Jobs bill?*

A) I would oppose increasing Illinois’ Renewable Portfolio Standard if it meant increasing power costs for working families. While I support Green Jobs, I have reservations with the Illinois Clean Jobs bill. It is unclear to me whether or not their bill would deliver the jobs they promise or the proposed savings to consumers. Until I have clarification on those issues, I cannot say if I will support the bill.

Q)  *Illinois has to reduce carbon emissions by 44 percent under the federal rule.  Do you support creation of either a cap-and-trade program or a carbon tax to help mitigate carbon emissions in Illinois?*

A) At this point, I am hesitant to place additional barriers to economic development in Illinois when it is possible to achieve environmental goals, like lowering carbon emissions, through other means. I would like to see environmental advocates, those who generate and supply our power, and the business community sit down to try to find a solution that not only protects the environment but allows for the creation of good paying jobs for the residents of our state.

**Gun safety:**

Q) *Do you support tighter gun background check laws? Do you support limiting straw gun purchases?*

A) Yes and Yes

Q) *Do you support or oppose state licensing for all firearms dealers?*

A) Support

Q) *Do you support or oppose allowing families to petition the courts to temporarily remove guns from people in crisis?*

A) Support

**Criminal justice:**

Q) *Do you support or oppose legislation to promote the transparency and preservation of police disciplinary records?*

A) Chicago is in pain, there is no denying that. The majority of police officers are dedicated public servants who go to work each day to protect our city. Sadly, some members of the police force have taken actions that have caused many of our citizens to question the motives of all officers. Those officers who have gone beyond the scope of their duties should face punishment. There are also many societal issues here that need to be addressed including why so many of our citizens turn to crime, are those with mental illness receiving the services they need, are there scaled down measures our police officers can at times use when confronting those suspected of committing crimes, including the use of Tasers where some level of force is needed? We need to find solutions to these issues and more if we are to move forward.

Q)  *Do you support the goal of reducing the Illinois adult prison population by 25% by 2025? Would you support sentencing reform such as reducing or eliminating prison terms for non-violent drug offenses? Would you support early release of aged and disabled prisoners predicated on an assessment of risk to public safety prior to release?*

A) I believe everyone would prefer to have fewer of our citizens in prison but I do not support releasing prisons for no other reason than our prison system is set to achieve some arbitrary number of prisoners. What we need to do is address the problems that are leading to our citizens breaking the law, being prosecuted, and put behind bars for those crimes. I could consider reducing prison terms for non-violent drug offenses especially if the offender has shown that a willingness to address the issues that put them in prison in the first place. Early release is very complicated issue and I would have to understand any proposals and how they are viewed by those involved in criminal justice.

Q) *Do you support automatic expungement and sealing of criminal records for all crimes after an appropriate period during which the former offender commits no crimes?*

A) That is a very difficult issue and the question encompasses a wide range of crimes. I believe it needs careful study, including its effects on the victims and their families, especially for those victims of very serious crimes.

Q) *Given that there are more empty beds than youth now in the juvenile prisons, do you support closing one or more juvenile prisons?*

A) I would need more information from those in the criminal justice system about this issue before making a decision.

Q) *What is your view on a proposal to end the placement of juveniles on the state’s sex offender registry based on assessment of their risk and likelihood to reoffend and/or benefit from treatment? For adult sex offenders, what is your view on delivery of rehabilitation therapy and limiting sex offender registry restrictions only to those men and women assessed to pose a danger to others?*

A) I believe we must have the laws and subsequent penalties in place that protect our children and adults from sexual predators.

Q) *Do you support a form of merit selection of judges?*

A) I support ensuring the best and brightest within the legal world are given the opportunity to serve as a judge if they so choose.

**Other:**

Q) *Do you support the pending constitutional amendment to create an independent commission to draw legislative districts?*

A) I believe the question is referring to the proposal put forth by a group known as Independent Maps. I’ve spoken with representatives of the Hispanic, Asian and African American communities and share their concerns that the proposal will unfairly impact their communities.

Q) *What changes in workers’ compensation or tort reform do you favor?*

A) I would like to sit down with all the stakeholders and see what reforms all sides could agree upon.

Q) *Do you support or oppose automatic voter registration?*

A) Support

Q) *What sort of ethics and campaign-funding reforms does the state need?*

A) There was a time when people looked up to those who represented them. Now, they can point to a number of former elected officials in Illinois serving prison sentences. We need to strengthen the penalties for those who violate the public’s trust. It is time that we go above and beyond what we have done in the past to restore the public’s trust in those they have elected to represent them.

Q) *2016 is going to be a big year in education, as both state and the City of Chicago wrestle with fundamental issues of funding and school policy. Who was the most important teacher in your life and why?*

A) I had a myriad of influential teachers in my life. However, there is one who stood out the most and mentored me throughout my years of high school. Mr. Harris of Whitney Young High School, who was my Geometry teacher, Baseball coach, and Home Room teacher. Mr. Harris was influential in helping me get good grades, as well as adapt to a diverse student environment. His guidance as a baseball coach instilled an understanding of teamwork and dedication. Also his hard working attitude motivated me to want to be a disciplined student and athlete.